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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 MEXICO 002276

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INL

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [MX](#)

SUBJECT: SECRETARY CHERTOFF AND GOM OFFICIALS DISCUSS  
SECURITY COOPERATION AND SHARED CHALLENGES

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Charles V. Barclay. Reason:  
1.4 (b), (d).

11. (SBU) Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Michael Chertoff met with GOM security cabinet officials during an official visit to Mexico July 17-18 to discuss issues related to U.S.-Mexico law enforcement cooperation. He attended the GOM's National Security Council meeting on July 18 and met separately with Secretary of Public Security Garcia Luna, Attorney General Medina Mora, Secretary of Government Mourino together with Foreign Relations Secretary Patricia Espinosa, and Secretary of National Defense Gen. Galvan Galvan together with Secretary of the Navy Adm. Saynez Mendoza.

#### Merida Initiative

12. (C) Secretary Chertoff remarked that he was pleased that the Merida Initiative (MI) had been approved and said that the USG was ready to engage in detailed discussions on implementing the various elements of the package. He highlighted the key role of the Ambassador and the team at U.S. Embassy Mexico City in contributing to the passage of MI and stressed his expectation that DHS would remain significantly engaged in implementation of the program. The Ambassador pointed out that the country team in place at the Embassy will largely remain (with the exception of himself) through the change of administrations in the U.S.; retaining this core group should contribute to more effective implementation. GOM Cabinet Ministers were similarly pleased with passage of MI and eager to press forward with its implementation. Foreign Relations Secretary Espinosa stressed the importance of bilateral collaboration with the State Department. Attorney General Medina Mora called MI "the biggest step forward since NAFTA." The Foreign Relations Secretariat (SRE) is leading an interagency group on a visit to Washington the week of July 21 to discuss next steps on MI.

#### Cooperation on Semi-Submersible Intercept

13. (SBU) GOM counterparts expressed great appreciation for the information DHS provided to the Mexican Navy which resulted in the seizure of the semi-submersible packed with 5.8 tons of cocaine. They were especially appreciative that we had collaborated with them in manner demonstrating respect for Mexican sovereignty. The intercept reinforced the importance of close cooperation, including the ability to share tactical information on a timely basis.

#### New Counter Narcotics Offensive

14. (SBU) Public Security (SSP) Secretary Garica Luna thanked Secretary Chertoff for the USG's cooperation in the drug war

and noted the GOM's success in attacking the "logistics" and "capacity" of organized criminal gangs. As a result, the larger cartels had become fractured into smaller, yet more dangerous groups. The GOM is planning a new offensive against these groups which will include an aggressive front in Sinaloa while maintaining pressure in Tamaulipas and Michoacan. Because the Federal Police are now moving into areas historically controlled by the drug cartels, violence is expected to increase. He is deploying 10,000 new, vetted police along the border, and expressed appreciation for DHS help with the vetting.

15. (SBU) The Secretary of National Defense (SEDENA) Galvan said the military is remains engaged in fighting drugs through its aggressive eradication program and significant seizures. Galvan acknowledged that the military is under severe pressure due to the surge in violence by organized criminal groups. As a regrettable consequence, he warned that there may be isolated/rare incidents where soldiers have overreacted and used excessive force. He also suggested that organized criminal groups are using negative propaganda to pressure the President into pulling the military out of the battle against organized crime.

#### Border Violence Protocols

16. (SBU) Secretary Chertoff highlighted progress made thus far this year on refining the Border Violence Protocols (BVP), and incorporating SSP and their growing capabilities into the protocols, as an excellent example of how U.S.-Mexico cooperation improves security for both nations.

MEXICO 00002276 002 OF 004

GOM counterparts echoed the Secretary's praise of this effort and conveyed their commitment to coordinating operational responses to violence and security incidents along the border more effectively. Foreign Relations Secretary Espinosa requested that SRE be brought into the BVP discussions.

#### Information Sharing

17. (SBU) Secretary Chertoff stressed the importance of continuing to improve US-Mexico information sharing activities as the key element required to achieve all our joint goals. On this issue, SSP Secretary Garcia Luna provided a tour of his "Platform Mexico" command center ) a state of the art facility that will integrate national level intelligence with reports from state and local authorities into a single database. The center already can receive live feeds from thousands of cameras throughout Mexico and is expected to reach full operational capability in 2-3 months.

18. (C) Garcia Luna drew attention to the important contribution U.S. assistance has played in the development of Platform Mexico, and expressed interest in discussing how our two countries can develop a more robust information sharing regime based on this new capability. SSP also provided a brief on its impressive link analysis capabilities that take an all source intelligence approach to defining and interdicting criminal networks, including a focus on tracking funds through criminal attorney activities.

#### Dealing with SIAs

19. (C) Secretary Chertoff recommended reducing the number of countries on the Special Interest Alien (SIA) list to better target SIAs that present the greatest threat. He also informed GOM officials that the U.S. was prepared to assist in repatriating SIAs back to their country of origin.

110. (C) Medina Mora said that the GOM is apprehending approximately 1500 SIAs annually (mostly Iraqi Christians and some Chinese and Cubans) but that the current law requires the government to release them relatively early. While he noted that the GOM was doing a better job of monitoring and detaining SIAs that attempt to enter Mexico by air, it was

the land border that posed the greatest risk. Medina Mora said that not a single terrorist had entered the U.S. to date from Mexico, and that it is in the GOM's interest to ensure one never does so as to avoid an irrational reaction by the U.S.

#### Dealing with Cuban Migrants

¶11. (C) Medina Mora expressed concern about the flow of Cuban migrants into Mexico, many of whom have criminal backgrounds.

He was pessimistic about progress on this issue given both the U.S.' policy of accepting Cubans (under the dry-foot policy) and Cuba's policy of refusing to take them back. He informed Chertoff that the GOM would send a delegation to Cuba for meetings July 23-24 that would include a discussion of illegal immigration.

#### The Release of Navarro Montes

12.(C) Medina Mora explained circumstances surrounding the release of Navarro Montes, accused of killing a Border Patrol (BP) officer six months ago. He said that the judge had ruled that the Mexican immigration official who filed the complaint lacked the legal authority to do so and as a result the case was dismissed. He explained that although Navarro Montes had made admissions regarding his involvement in the BP officer's death, the admissions were not enough to prosecute him in Mexican courts. It was agreed that Navarro Montes should be tried in a U.S. court. Medina Mora assured Secretary Chertoff that the apprehension and extradition of Navarro Montes are one of PGR's highest priorities.

#### OASISS and Cooperation on Marijuana

¶13. (SBU) Medina Mora described two phases of OASISS: (1) apprehension operations at the border and (2) integration of information to ensure successful prosecutions. While PGR would like to expand the current OASISS program, it currently lacks the equipment to do so; it expects to expand the program later this year. PGR is working on providing judges with refined sentencing criteria to achieve greater

MEXICO 00002276 003 OF 004

consistency; presently, judges preserve too much discretion in handing down sentences which encourages corruption. Medina Mora also underscored the need for the U.S. to prosecute more, remarking that trafficking in marijuana was a critical secondary cash source for the cartels. On that note, he expressed his desire to use the OASISS as a model to prosecute firearms and drug smuggling cases not accepted for prosecution in the U.S. In response, Secretary Chertoff noted that U.S. Attorney General Mukasey is increasing the number of federal prosecutors along the southwest border which should result in the U.S. prosecuting more smugglers.

#### Unmanned Aerial Surveillance (UAS)

¶14. (C) Secretary Chertoff emphasized the capability of UAS to provide high quality, real-time video tracking threat activities right through to the end game. At the Roundtable attended by the major GOM National Security Cabinet members, Secretary Chertoff mentioned that the upcoming change of administrations would inevitably slow progress on issues like joint UAS operations, and said he would like to see an agreement in place and operations starting before the end of the year. GOM cabinet members responded very positively to the UAS issue. Government Secretary Mourino agreed that a "window of opportunity" existed before the new U.S. administration took office, and that we should move rapidly to initiate a pilot UAS project. Defense Secretary Galvan, SSP Secretary Garcia-Luna, and CISEN Deputy Director Mohar also strongly endorsed the UAS concept. In an aside after the meeting concluded, Foreign Relations Undersecretary Rico said that SRE would like to understand more of the operational details of the UAS proposal.

## HALCON

¶15. (C) In his meetings with GOM counterparts, Secretary Chertoff requested the reactivation of the HALCON -- a cooperative U.S.-Mexico air interdiction program )- and hoped that the SRE will soon provide the required Diplomatic Note for its reactivation. SSP has provided SRE a legal analysis of their authority to conduct air interdiction operations, which previously were under PGR,s authority, and SRE is currently considering this analysis.

### Drug Smuggling

¶16. (C) Medina Mora said there have been 5000 deaths since December 2006, mostly cartel members ) but that figure also includes 500 Mexican officials, mostly state and local police. He expects methamphetamine to shift to a pattern of direct export from Asia to the U.S., eliminating Mexico as an "unnecessary middleman." He sees Mexican and Colombian drug cartels moving operations into Guatemala, and believes the improving U.S. and Mexican enforcement capabilities are going to raise the cartels' "opportunity costs" making Mexico a less attractive smuggling route. He opined that we could see activity out of Guatemala and increases in smuggling across the Caribbean.

### The Southern Border

¶17. (C) GOM officials raised their concern regarding the need to secure Mexico's porous Southern border. Garcia Luna expressed concern over the recent desertion of a large percentage of the Guatemalan military. He said air smugglers are landing in the Northern border of Guatemala and Mexico, making interdiction much more difficult. Medina Mora is concerned about the increasing strength of the Maras, and believes there are now 150,000 Mara members in Central America. It is now a crime to belong to the Maras in Mexico, but they are getting politically stronger in El Salvador. The GOM wants to see stronger Central American, particularly Guatemalan, law enforcement capabilities, with a focus on drug smuggling and human trafficking. They are very pleased that the Merida Initiative includes funds to assist the Central Americans in fighting organized crime.

### Weapons Smuggling

¶18. (SBU) Secretary Chertoff expressed appreciation for Mexican cooperation on Operation Armas Cruzadas. He expected the effort's focus on leveraging intelligence to dismantle weapon smuggling networks would be highly effective. Medina Mora noted Mexico had already confiscated 16,000 weapons over

MEXICO 00002276 004 OF 004

the past year, but that the Federal Police still find themselves "outgunned" by the cartels.

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